

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 are pending in the present application. In the Office Action dated May 25, 2006, claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,468,096 to Franz ("Franz"), and U.S. Patent No. 3,175,331 to Klein ("Klein"). Claims 1-6 and 9-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,451,758 to McClain ("McClain"). Claims 1, 4 and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,282,900 to McDonell et al. ("McDonell"). Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over McClain.

The embodiments disclosed in the present application will now be discussed in comparison to the cited references. Of course, the discussion of the disclosed embodiments, and the discussion of the differences between the disclosed embodiments and the cited references, does not define the scope or interpretation of any of the claims. Instead, such discussed differences merely help the Examiner appreciate important claim distinctions discussed thereafter.

The present application is generally directed toward a soap bar having a scrubbing element. According to one embodiment of the invention, the scrubbing soap bar includes a scrubbing element having a filamentous network with internal void regions. The scrubbing element may be formed from essentially the filamentous network that advantageously permits the scrubbing soap bar to cleanse objects having recesses and crevices. Thus, the scrubbing element does not need additional abrasive particles disposed thereon to effectively function as an abrasive medium. The disclosed scrubbing element is substantially surrounded by and encased in a layer of a rigid soap material that extends beyond the scrubbing element. The soap material also at least partially fills the internal void regions of the scrubbing element. The soap bar may be formed by pouring a semi-liquid stream of soap material into a mold. The soap bar is formed when the semi-liquid stream of soap material solidifies into a solid soap material.

The Examiner has cited the Franz and McClain patents. Figure 2 of the Franz patent shows a scouring pad having a washing compound interposed between superposed layers of non-woven fibrous material. The McClain patent also similarly discloses superposed fibrous layers 10 and 11 with a detergent cake 12 therebetween. Thus, the Franz and McClain patents do

not disclose or fairly suggest a non-woven fibrous material substantially surrounded by a solid or rigid washing compound. The Examiner contends that as the bars shown in Franz and McClain patents become used, the detergent composition will inherently surround the fibrous layers entirely due to the foaming properties normally associated with the scouring pads. However, the detergent composition that surrounds the fibrous layers in the form of foaming is not a rigid layer of soap since the foam created by a detergent composition is flexible. Therefore, neither Franz nor McClain disclose or fairly suggest a non-woven fibrous material substantially surrounded by a layer of rigid soap material.

The Examiner has also cited the Klein patent. The Klein patent discloses a cleaning pad that may be formed from a single ply of batt 13 containing randomly-arranged fibers 6. The batt 13 has sprayed over one or both side surfaces 16 and 20, heat-sealable adhesive 9 in an amount sufficient to allow the peripheral edges 12 to be heat sealed. In addition to the adhesive 9, abrasive containing adhesive 10 is also applied to the batt 13. The batt 13 having heat sealed peripheral edges 12 and the abrasive containing adhesive 10 is then dipped into a solution or paste of washing composition and thereafter drying the cleaning pad so that the dried washing composition is incorporated into the interstices of the batt 13. The scrubbing element of the cleaning pad disclosed in Klein includes not only the batt 13, but the abrasive particles of the abrasive containing adhesive 10 disposed on the batt 13. Klein does not disclose or fairly suggest a scrubbing element consisting of a filamentous network with internal void regions. Furthermore, Klein does not disclose or fairly suggest that the dried washing composition extends beyond the batt. In fact, the Klein reference states only that the solid washing composition is incorporated into the interstices of the pad. There is no indication that the solid washing composition extends beyond the pad.

Finally, the Examiner cited the McDonell patent. The McDonell patent discloses a surface treating article that is formed from a nonwoven fibrous web coated with a binder formulation containing abrasive particles. Surfactants may be added to the binder formulation. The abrasive particles are bonded to the fibers of the nonwoven fibrous web. Therefore, to the extent that the fibrous web is a scrubbing element, it has abrasive particles disposed thereon that function as the scrubbing element. McDonell does not disclose or fairly suggest a scrubbing element consisting of a filamentous network with internal void regions. Furthermore, McDonell

does not disclose or fairly suggest that the surfactant substantially surrounds and extends beyond the scrubbing element.

Turning now to the claims, the patentably distinct differences between the cited references and the claim language will be specifically pointed out. Currently amended independent claim 1 recites, in part, “a scrubbing element having a filamentous network with internal void regions.” Claim 1 further recites “a layer of rigid soap material substantially surrounding the scrubbing element and at least partially filling the void regions of the scrubbing element” The Franz and the McClain reference does not disclose or fairly suggest the above limitations. In fact, as alluded to above, both the Franz and the McClain reference refers to a washing compound or a detergent cake interposed between superposed layers of a scrubbing element. The washing compound or the detergent cake is not a layer of rigid soap material that substantially surrounds the scrubbing element. To the extent the detergent or washing compound may surround the scrubbing element in the form of foam, the foam is not a rigid layer. In contrast, presently amended independent claim 1 requires the scrubbing element to be substantially surrounded by a rigid layer of soap material.

The Klein and McDonell patents also fail to disclose or fairly suggest the limitations in currently amended independent claim 1. In fact, as alluded to above, the objects described in both the Klein and McDonell references include abrasive particles that are disposed in the batt and the nonwoven fibrous web, respectively. In contrast, currently amended independent claim 1 requires that a scrubbing element have a filamentous network with internal void regions. Therefore, currently amended independent claim 1 is allowable over the Franz, McClain, Klein, and McDonell references. Claims depending from claim 1 are also allowable due to depending from an allowable base claim and further in view of the additional limitations recited in the dependent claims.

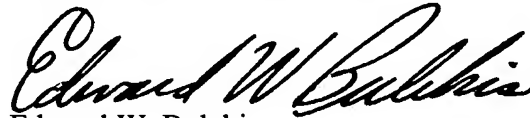
New independent claim 28 recites, in part, “a rigid soap material that substantially surrounds and extends beyond the scrubbing element.” The Franz and the McClain reference does not disclose or fairly suggest the above limitations based on the same reasoning made above under independent claim 1. In addition, the Klein and the McDonell references fail to disclose or fairly suggest the limitations in independent claim 28. In fact, as alluded to above, Klein merely discloses that the batt is dipped into a washing composition and dried so that the washing

compound is incorporated into the interstices of the batt. There is no indication that the washing composition extends beyond the batt. In fact, the Klein reference describes drying the pad so that the washing composition is incorporated into the pad, but does not suggest that the washing compound substantially surrounds and extends beyond the scrubbing element. Similarly, the McDonell reference merely discloses that a surfactant may be added to the binder formulation. There is no indication that the surfactant substantially surrounds and extends beyond the nonwoven fibrous web. In contrast, new independent claim 28 requires a rigid soap material that substantially surrounds and extends beyond the scrubbing element. Therefore, new independent claim 28 is allowable over the Franz, McClain, Klein, and McDonell references.

All of the claims remaining in the application are now clearly allowable. Favorable consideration and a timely Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

DORSEY & WHITNEY LLP



Edward W. Bulchis

Registration No. 26,847

Telephone No. (206) 903-8785

EWB/KL:sp

Enclosures:

Postcard

Check

Fee Transmittal Sheet (+ copy)

Request for Continued Examination

DORSEY & WHITNEY LLP
1420 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3400
Seattle, WA 98101-4010
(206) 903-8800 (telephone)
(206) 903-8820 (fax)